

Minutes of DAAC Meeting

Attendance

DAAC members present were: Seren Derin, Chair; Joe Tringali, Vice-chair; Irene Barrelet, Clerk; Joan Rising; and Jim MacRostie.

Others present were Gerry Weiss, Select Board Representative; Nathaniel Malloy, DAAC staff liaison

Absent: Dana Goddard; Reginald Andrade

CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Derin called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. Malloy announced that the Massachusetts Office on Disability is offering a two-day workshop on June 3rd and 4th in Greenfield. The workshop will focus on regulations of the Architectural Access Board and ADA standards for accessible design.

MINUTES

Minutes from the April, 2009 meeting were reviewed and discussed. No corrections were found. Ms. Rising made a motion to accept the minutes; Ms. Barrelet seconded the motion, and the vote was unanimous to accept the April minutes as submitted.

NEW BUSINESS

Emergency contact information form and flyer

Mr. Malloy reiterated that the emergency contact system to be implemented by the Town of Amherst will reach individuals who cannot use the conventional reverse 9-1-1. The system works by dialing the number of personal and hand held devices for individuals that are hard of hearing or visually impaired, which is different than the typical landline system. Mr. Malloy explained that the Information Technology Department in Amherst was researching exactly how this system would work and was drafting a press release/contact information form to be distributed online, in the newspaper and through any media necessary to reach the public.

Mr. Tringali suggested that the IT Department work with Leisure Services and Supplemental Education (LSSE) to help distribute the contact information form.

LSSE—Accessibility at Mill River Recreation Area & Community Field

Mr. Malloy explained that at a meeting with Ms. Chalfant, Director of LSSE, she asked if the Disability Access Advisory Committee would support efforts to increase accessibility at the Mill River Recreation Area and at Community Field. The projects would include adding appropriate seating, parking, and curb cuts to allow people to use the recreational facilities.

Mr. Tringali noted that the primary reasons people go to these places, especially in the summer, is to use the pool and picnic areas. Therefore, a priority would be to make sure the pools, picnic areas, and facilities were fully accessible. He referenced the Town's Accessibility Survey in the

Transition Plan, which should address which elements at each recreation area need to be upgraded and list the associated project costs.

Ms. Rising noted that there are no HP spaces near Community Field and the Regional High School fields (especially the track). She said that people must walk too great a distance, down very steep embankments, to get to these fields.

Mr. Weiss asked if there were funding opportunities to help address these concerns and fix the facilities.

Visitability

Mr. Malloy explained that visitability could be incorporated into Amherst's development regulations as incentives, such as awarding density bonuses to applicants who satisfy visitability provisions.

Mr. Tringali referenced *Concrete Change*, an organization that works with communities across the nation to integrate visitability design and development requirements into local ordinances. He said that in some communities, regulations require that any project receiving federal or state funding must meet certain visitability requirements. He explained that visitability does not mean universal design, but does require access into the structure, and a bathroom, kitchen and bedroom, which are typically on the ground floor.

Ms. Derin asked if visitability design guidelines could be used to renovate and update public places and parking areas so that they may become accessible. She mentioned that it would be a great achievement if the retail shops and places such as doctors' offices could be made visitable.

Mr. Tringali volunteered to research *Concrete Change* and report back at a subsequent meeting.

Other

Committee Membership

Ms. Derin said that she would like to have Mr. Andrade's membership revoked by the Town Manager due to his absence of at least seven consecutive meetings and because he had emailed her explaining that he would no longer be able to participate with the Disability Access Advisory Committee.

OLD BUSINESS

High School Auditorium

Ms. Derin noted that even though the number of accessible seats satisfies the AAB regulations, many of the front row seats are not available during performances. For instance, during the Valley Light Opera, musicians and their instruments occupy the accessible seating areas. Fire regulations do not allow seating in the aisles, so that it is difficult during such performances to find an accessible seat that is vacant.

Mr. MacRostie reiterated that folding chairs could be used for companion seating and if the accessible seating is not occupied during a performance, more folding chairs could be located to fill the space.

Mr. Malloy said he would follow up with Mr. Bohonowicz, Director of Maintenance, about making sure the accessible seats are clear of supplies and that they are clearly marked.

Private Parking Lots

Mr. Weiss said that he would investigate whether the Select Board would sponsor an article at the fall Town Meeting or the next annual Town Meeting that would create town-wide parking regulations for handicapped parking spaces (on private property). He suggested that if a town-wide regulation was adopted, that parking fines should increase to \$300 to help fund enforcement.

Amherst Train Station

Ms. Derin questioned whether Amtrak will discontinue service to Amherst in the near future, and thus make it unlikely that funds would be spent to make the waiting platform accessible.

Mr. Tringali noted that it is the committee's responsibility to serve the rights of the entire community, and if the platform needs to be updated, then the DAAC should work to resolve the issue. He said that both Amtrak and New England Central Railway are responsible for the platform, even if Amtrak leases it.

Mr. Weiss said that the irony of closing the Amherst Train Station is that it is one of, if not the most, heavily used commuter rail station in western Massachusetts.

Other

Ms. Rising noted that the parking is quite bad along Spring Street near the Parish Hall and Grace Church, however, visitors can park in the Town Common and use the elevator to get to the covered walkway; this is a barrier-free route through a well-designed renovation.

Next Meeting

June 16, 2009 @ 3:00 pm.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:50 PM

Respectfully submitted,
Nathaniel Malloy, staff liaison